

BE PREPARED WHEN WILDFIRE APPROACHES

You will give yourself and your family a better chance of escaping harm during a wildfire by following as many of the precautions outlined in this information sheet as possible. But these steps are only the beginning:

Before a wildfire strikes:

- Know where your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls are and how to turn them off if there is a leak or electrical short. Also, know how to use a fire extinguisher. Make sure all adult and teenage members of your family know how to shut off each utility and to use the extinguisher.
- Become familiar with your community's disaster-preparedness plans and create a family plan. Know where the closest police, fire and emergency medical facilities are located. Plan several different escape routes from your home and neighborhood and designate an emergency meeting place for the family to reunite. Establish a contact point to communicate with concerned relatives.
- Put together an emergency kit that includes at least a three-day supply of drinking water and food that needs no refrigeration and, generally, no cooking; emergency cooking equipment, if required; a portable NOAA weather radio; first aid supplies and medications; basic tools, such as a wrench, a flashlight and gloves; portable lanterns and batteries; credit cards and cash; and important documents, including insurance policies.
- Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together before, during and after a wildfire. Make a list of your neighbors' skills such as medical or technical. Consider how you would help neighbors who have special needs such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.
- Periodically review your homeowner's insurance policy with your insurance agent or company to make sure that, if you are the victim of a disaster, you have enough coverage to rebuild your home and life.

During a wildfire:

- If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your portable radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials.
- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut car doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition or in another easily accessible location.
- Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Confine pets to one room. Make plans to take your pets with you in case you must evacuate.
- Arrange temporary housing outside the threatened area.
- When advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Wear protective clothing – sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take your emergency kit.
- Lock your home.
- Notify your relatives and the local officials that you have left and where you can be reached.
- Follow the evacuation route that your local officials have identified. If no official route exists, choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of the fire and smoke.

If you are SURE you have the time, take additional steps to protect your home:

- Close windows, vents, doors, venetian blinds and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.
- Seal attic and ground vents.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Connect the garden hose to outside taps.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near aboveground fuel tanks. Wet the roof.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home.
- Gather fire tools, including a rake, axe, hand/chainsaw, bucket and shovel.

After a wildfire strikes:

- Listen to and follow the advice and recommendations of the local aid organizations, including the emergency management office, the fire department and the utility companies.
- Check for hazards, such as gas or water leaks and electrical shorts. Turn off damaged utilities.
- Have the fire department or gas and electric companies turn the utilities back on when the area is secured.
- Check for injuries and administer first aid as needed.
- Check your food and water supplies. Do not eat anything from open containers near shattered glass.



For more information about the Tennessee Firewise Communities Program, contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 40627, Nashville, TN 37204; 615-837-5537; Fax: 615-837-5129 or visit our Web site at:
www.state.tn.us/agriculture/forestry